Richard Fountain

Praised for his “clear, expressive playing,” “mature display of pyrotechnics,” and “seasoned artistry,” pianist Richard Fountain has steadily garnered praise for his versatile abilities as a soloist, a coveted collaborator, and an accomplished teacher.

Originally from Springfield, Nebraska, Fountain began studies with his mother Judy and continued with David Gerard. He then studied with Leon Harshenin at Taylor University and with Paul Barnes at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Fountain received the prestigious Early Achiever Award from the Nebraska Alumni Association in 2017, was a semi-finalist in the 2017 Franz Liszt International Piano Competition, and was named the 2015 “Teacher of the Year” by the Lubbock Music Teachers Association. His 2012 solo recording “American Ivory,” featuring works by MacDowell, Copland, Barber, and Gary D. Belshaw, won joint Third Prize in The American Prize for Solo Piano.

In recent seasons Fountain has performed Bernstein’s “Age of Anxiety” as well as concertos by MacDowell, Shostakovich, and J.S. Bach, in addition to thoughtfully programmed solo recitals and extensive activities as a vocal, instrumental, chamber, and choral collaborator. Fountain’s current major project is a complete cycle of Franz Liszt’s monumental transcriptions of Beethoven’s nine symphonies, each paired with a solo Beethoven sonata. This three-year project commemorates the 250th anniversary of Beethoven’s birth in 2020. During the 2018-19 season, Fountain will be performing the Fifth, Seventh, and Eighth symphonies. Other highlights for 2018-19 include performances of Tchaikovsky’s Piano Trio with violinist John Gilbert and cellist George Work, a celebration of contemporary women composers with clarinetist Sandra Mosteller, and a special performance of Liszt’s two-piano transcription of the choral finale of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony with pianist Sharon Lavery and the Central Texas Choral Society.

Richard and his wife Sarah live with their three children in Plainview, TX, where he is full Professor of Piano at Wayland Baptist University, a proud All-Steinway School. Fountain is a Nationally Certified Teacher of Music, serves on the Board of Directors of the Texas Music Teachers Association, and has served as President of the Lubbock Music Teachers Association. He also serves as chanter and choir director at St. Andrew Greek Orthodox Church in Lubbock and holds the positions of Principal Keyboard with both Lincoln’s Symphony Orchestra and the Lubbock Symphony Orchestra. Fountain’s website is www.richardfountainpianist.com.
Program

Trio in A minor, Op. 50

I. Pezzo Elegaico
II. Tema con Variazioni

Peter Ilyich Tchaikowsky
(1840-1893)

John Gilbert, violin
George Work, cello
Richard Fountain, piano

Program Notes

Dedicated to the memory of his mentor, Nicholas Rubinstein, the Tchaikowksy Trio is by any standard an extraordinary work. It consists of two massive movements (rather than the more usual three or four) that together comprise nearly an hour of music. Although written to express grief, the Trio is by no means dolorous throughout—only the principal theme of the first movement is mournful. The following themes in the first movement express a wide spectrum of emotions: joy, yearning, triumph. Death does have the final word, however, reasserting itself in funeral march-like moments midway through the movement and in its final bars.

Even if the Trio was not known to be a tribute to a beloved teacher, the second movement, the Theme and Variations, would provide a clue. In it, it seems almost as if Tchaikowsky wished to show his mastery of all the forms that he presumably explored while studying with Anton Rubinstein. The variations include a waltz, a mazurka, a full-blown fugue, and end with a large-scale sonata-allegro form that could almost stand as an independent movement on its own. The last variation is not the end of the piece, however—as it builds to a triumphant conclusion, it is interrupted by an ominous series of chords, portending the return of the grief-filled first theme, that will not be denied, and erupts into a powerful and passionate restatement, finally dying away quietly in the end.

Artists Bios

John Gilbert

Violinist John Gilbert is Professor of Violin at the Texas Tech University School of Music in Lubbock, TX. He is the recipient of the 2015 TexASTA Phyllis Young Outstanding Studio Teacher Award, and the TTU President's Award for Excellence in Teaching. He is an active soloist, recitalist and chamber music collaborator, regularly performing throughout the United States, having appeared from coast to coast in prestigious venues from Weill Recital Hall in New York City, to Abravanel Hall in Santa Barbara (CA). International engagements have included performances in Brazil, France, Iceland, Italy, and the United Kingdom. A sought after clinician and adjudicator, he has been heard in concert in every major city in Texas. His former students perform in major orchestras, hold university positions, and are public school educators, throughout the US, Brazil, and Russia.

A former member of the faculty at the SMU Meadows School of Music, University of Memphis, and Hope College, Gilbert was the teaching assistant to Sally O’Reilly at both the University of Minnesota and Louisiana State University. Currently artist faculty at the Pienza (Italy) Festival, he is a former member of the faculty of the Green Mountain (Vermont) Chamber Music Festival, Madeline Island (WI) Chamber Festival, Schlern (Italy) International Festival, Sewanee Summer Music Festival, BRAVO! Summer String Institute, Eastern Music Festival, Heidelberg Castle Festival, Killington Music Festival, and the Spoleto Festival.

Gilbert's principal studies were under the tutelage of Sally O’Reilly and Charles Castleman. He holds degrees from the University of Minnesota, the Yale University School of Music, and the Eastman School of Music, and has held fellowships at the Aspen Music School in both chamber music and orchestral performance. His chamber music studies were with the Juilliard, Tokyo, Cleveland, Fine Arts and Yale string quartets, and the Eastman and Rafael trios.

Mr. Gilbert may be heard on the Centaur, Naxos and Innova labels. His most recent recording, of the Sonatas of Erno Dohnanyi, Samuel Barber and Richard Strauss, will be released on the Fleur de Son label in the near future. His recording of the Kurt Weill Concerto and the Alban Berg Kammerkonzert with the Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra was released on the Sono Luminus label in September of 2012 (Sono Luminus 92161).